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WILLIAMS JESSIE M
78 STATE 312396

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/IR

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O P 112239Z DEC 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN IMMEDIATE
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
UNCLAS STATE 312396
USUN FOR JOHN BLACKEN
E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: GY, OREP (RYAN, LEO), CASE
SUBJECT: NOON PRESS BRIEFING DECEMBER 8, 1978

1. FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF PORTIONS OF NOON PRESS BRIEFING DECEMBER 8 RELATING TO GUYANA.

2. Q. HODDING, COULD YOU GIVE US SOME GUIDANCE AS TO WHY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR SEVEN DAYS NOW HAS FAILED TO ANSWER A UNITED STATES SENATOR'S RATHER UNCOMPLICATED QUESTION AS TO WHAT AUTHORITY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION CAN CITE FOR SPENDING SEVERAL MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN THE TRANSPORTATION OF BODIES FROM GUYANA -- SOME GUIDANCE. HODDING, THAT MIGHT LEAD US AWAY FROM THE CONCLUSION THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS STALLING?

A. NO. I DON'T HAVE ANY ANSWER FOR YOU ON WHY.

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Q. HODDING, THAT WAS A VERY SIMPLE QUESTION.

A. I UNDERSTAND THAT.

Q. IT WAS, AND YOU'VE GOT A BIG LEGAL DEPARTMENT. WHY IS IT THAT FOR SEVEN DAYS THE SENATOR GETS NO ANSWER? THIS IS A MATTER OF MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THAT HAVE BEEN SPENT. ALL HE WANTS TO KNOW IS THE AUTHORITY. CAN YOU JUST GO OUT AND SPEND $8 MILLION WITHOUT ACCOUNTING TO THE UNITED STATES SENATE? DO YOU HAVE THAT OPTION OR WHAT?

A. THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THAT IS POSSIBLE, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO DEBATE IT. WHEN WE HAVE AN ANSWER, I'LL GIVE IT.

Q. YOU ASKED YESTERDAY, AND THEY JUST SAID, "WE'RE STUDYING IT," OR WHAT WAS THEIR REACTION?

A. THEY SAID, WE'LL GIVE YOU AN ANSWER WHEN WE HAVE AN ANSWER TO GIVE YOU.

Q. THAT'S THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT.

Q. IS THERE ANYTHING NEW ON GUYANA, IN YOUR FOLDER?

A. LET ME RUN THROUGH WHAT I CAN.

Q. CAN YOU CONFIRM THE TAPE RECORDER STORY?

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A. YES, I'LL CONFIRM THAT A TAPE WAS FOUND. I CONFIRM FURTHER THAT ANY STATEMENTS ABOUT IT HAVE TO COME FROM JUSTICE BECAUSE IT MAY PLAY A ROLE IN AN ONGOING INVESTIGATION AND POSSIBLE LEGAL ACTION ARISING FROM THE EVENTS IN GUYANA. THAT CAME OUT OF THE TAPE, TOO. THAT'S ABOUT ALL I CAN SAY ON IT.
ON GUYANA. LET ME TELL, AS OF THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON THE 7TH, 36 SURVIVORS REMAIN IN GUYANA IN THE FOLLOWING STATUS: TWO ARRESTED AND CHARGED; ONE HOSPITALIZED; 33 HELD AS MATERIAL WITNESSES. FORTY-FOUR SURVIVORS HAVE RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES.
DECEASED: THERE HAVE BEEN 564 BODIES IDENTIFIED AS OF NOON DECEMBER 7, WHICH IS YESTERDAY; THE DEPARTMENT HAD CONTACTED THE NEXT-OF-KIN AND/OR INTERESTED PARTIES CONCERNING 412 DECEASED INDIVIDUALS. ALL NOTIFICATIONS HAVE BEEN BY TELEPHONE. OF THOSE NOTIFIED, 25 INDICATED ORALLY THAT THEY DID NOT WANT OR WERE UNABLE TO CLAIM THE BODIES. THESE PERSONS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO CONFIRM HIS NEGATIVE RESPONSE BY TELEGRAM TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
STATE.
Q. TEEN WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE BODIES THAT PEOPLE DON'T WANT?
A. THAT, OF COURSE, IS ALSO A MATTER OF DETERMINATION AFTER WE SEE.
Q. WHAT WAS THE LAST FIGURE?
A. THE LAST FIGURE WAS 25 HAD INDICATED ORALLY THAT THEY DID NOT WANT -- THIS IS BOTH NEXT-OF-KIN, OR IN THOSE INSTANCES WHERE THEY DON'T EXIST, INTERESTED PARTIES, WHICH MAY MEAN FRIENDS OR KNOWN ACQUAINTANCES OR THE LIKE.
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Q. HAS THE DEPARTMENT'S INTERNAL INVESTIGATION FINISHED YET?
A. NO.
Q. WILL YOU BE ABLE TO ANSWER THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE QUESTIONS BY TUESDAY, WHICH THEY HAVE ASKED?
A. I DON'T KNOW. I KNOW THEY HAVE AN INITIAL EARLIER DEADLINE, AND WE ARE WORKING VERY HARD ON MEETING AND ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS RAISED AND TO GIVE A FULL ACCOUNTING.
Q. DOES THAT INCLUDE THE SAME QUESTIONS THAT SENATOR HELMS HAS ANSWERED (SIC)? MAYBE THAT'S WHAT'S HOLDING -- MAYBE THAT'S THE LOGICAL ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.
A. I KNOW IT'S A LOGICAL ANSWER, BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU A LOGICAL ANSWER IF I'M NOT SURE IT'S THE ANSWER.
Q. WELL, I THINK THAT'S GOOD. THAT MAY BE THE REASON

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WHY BOTH OF YOU CAN'T ANSWER HELMS' LETTER, BECAUSE THEY ARE GOING TO ANSWER IT TO THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE?

A. I WOULD LOVE TO TAKE THAT ONE, BUT I JUST DON'T KNOW.

CHRISTOPHER

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